Vagabond

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 10

English Edition

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Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

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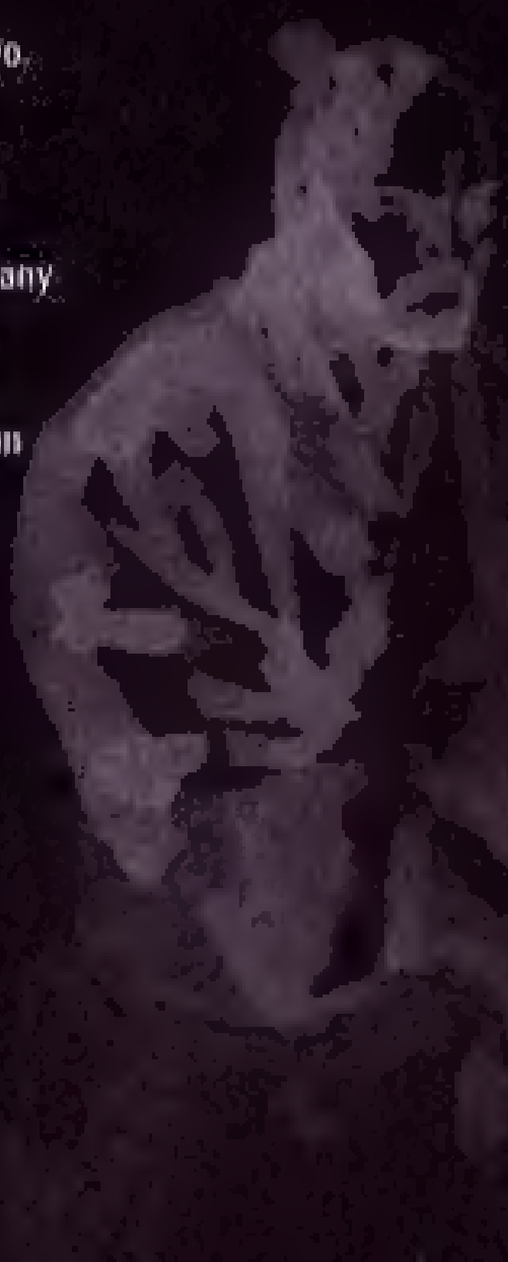


DON'T YOU DARE GIVE ME THAT LOOK, YOU BRAT!

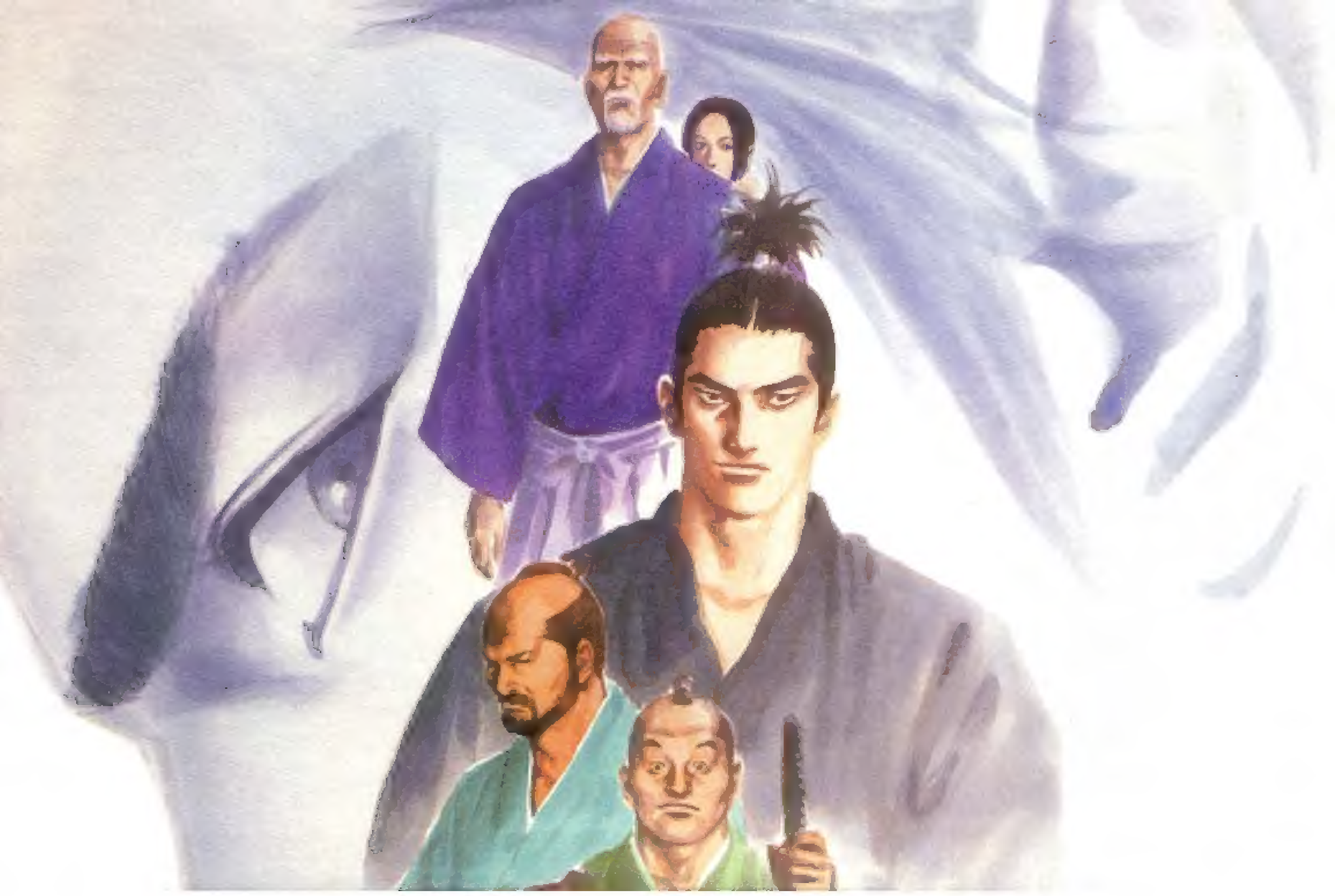
LIKE SOME DEMON CHILD!

C'MON, KILL ME!!

KILL ME!!

YOU'RE DEAD, BOY!!

.....



#88 Disciple

TUNK

DAMN IT!!

BARK LIKE A DOG!!

!!

NNGH.

ARRRGH!

I DID NOTHING WRONG!!

IT WAS AN HONORABLE FIGHT!!

GASP!

THWAP

THWAP

ARRRGH!

THWAP

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, DOG?

YOU BASTARD!!

THUNK

NGHH!!

!

!!

THUMP

MUSASHI
...

!!

ALL OF YOU NEED TO GANG UP ON THE BOY?

THUMP

...?!

MASTER

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!

THE MASTER MUST PAY...

...FOR HIS DISCIPLE'S OFFENSES.

?

GRAB

TUGG

DAMN IT, JŌTA.

YAHH!

NO! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.

IT IS SAID THAT...

WE'LL HOLD YOU BOTH RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS OFFENSE!!

THAT SUITS US FINE.

WHAT?

SO YOU'RE THIS BRAT'S MASTER.

WE'LL BOTH FIGHT YOU.

ALL RIGHT...

...?!

UMF!!

THWUNK

URRGH!

!!

!!

GASP!

WHO...

MIKIMURA !!

FWIP

DAMN RONIN, WHERE ARE YOU FROM?!

YOU BASTARD...

THIS ISN'T GOOD...

.....

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, MUSASHI?

WHY GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO STIR THINGS UP?

NOT OUR LORD. NOT HYOGONOSUKE. NOT EVEN ANY OF THE OTHER RETAINERS KNOW ABOUT OUR INVITATION TO MUSASHI.

NO ONE KNEW ABOUT THIS...

WE MUST PUT A STOP TO THIS BEFORE IT GETS OUT OF HAND.

NOW THEN...

THE INVINCIBLE YAGYU...

LET'S SEE WHAT KIND OF PUNISHMENT YOU HAVE IN MIND.

PUNISH-
MENT?

IN-
CREDIBLE.

HE'S
CHALLENG-
ING US.

THAT'S
NOT THE
ATTITUDE OF
ONE ABOUT
TO FACE A
PUNISHENT.

GO STAY
BY THAT
BIG PINE
TREE.

RUN.

JOTARO...

TMP

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN SO ARROGANT?

RONIN...

HUF

HUF

HUF

I KNEW IT. HE'S UP TO SOMETHING.

BUT OF COURSE...

YOU'LL BE LEAVING HERE AS A CORPSE.

YOU'LL GET A TASTE OF YOUR TRUE WORTH BY THE TIME YOU LEAVE THESE GATES.

THAT ATTITUDE OF YOURS MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN YOU FAR...

...BUT THE YAGYU SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT.

YOUR THREATS ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN OTHERS I'VE HEARD BEFORE.

HMPH.

...!!

Vagabond

(JOTA'S IMPERSONATION OF MUSASHI.)

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING! I'M BACK WITH MORE SAKE!

BREATHE IN

MUST STAY CALM...

CONTROL ANGER...

BREATHE OUT

OKAY...

DAMN! WHERE'D THEY ALL GO?!

#89 One Man Battle

.....

WHO SENT YOU?!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

YAHH!!

CUT HIM DOWN!!

FWOOSH

ROGUE!!

!!

NO, WAIT!

FICH

FICH

FICH

NNF!

TUNK

TUGG

!!

TU

GASP!

TUNK

!!

TMP

?!

ARRGH!

TUMP
!!
UGH...
URR...

ALL RIGHT...

OH BOY! THE BATTLE!!

FIGHT

ENOUGH
!!

?!

STOP!
THAT'S
ENOUGH!!

PUT
YOUR
SWORDS
DOWN!!

SEVERAL MEN HAVE ALREADY BEEN INJURED.

THE DOG'S DEATH IS INDEED A SERIOUS MATTER, BUT LIVES MUST NOT BE LOST OVER THIS.

TARO IS DEAD AND THE GOOD NAME OF THE YAGYŪ HAS BEEN INSULTED— YOU CAN'T EXPECT US TO BACK DOWN!!

YES, BUT—

WE SHALL TAKE CHARGE OF THIS AFFAIR NOW. RETURN TO YOUR POSTS!!

THIS MAN HAS ULTERIOR MOTIVES.

WE'RE TAKING CHARGE HERE.

WE WILL RESOLVE THIS MATTER. PLEASE BACK DOWN.

OR PERHAPS YOU DO NOT TRUST US TO HANDLE THIS AFFAIR?

THEREFORE, YOU SHALL BE ALLOWED TO COMMIT HARAKIRI.

YOU MAY PROVE YOUR WORTH AS A SAMURAI.

HMPH!

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. THE BATTLE'S JUST BEGUN.

YOU WANT ME TO CUT MY OWN BELLY?

IF SEKISHŪSAI REFUSES TO SEE ME, THEN I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE...

BATTLE?!

I'LL TAKE ON THE ENTIRE CASTLE!!

!

...AND HE'S WILLING TO SINGLE-HANDEDLY TAKE ON THE ENTIRE CASTLE IN ORDER TO DO IT!

HE'S JUST DOING THIS BECAUSE HE WANTS TO CHALLENGE OUR LORD...

HE'S NOT WORKING FOR ANYONE...

WHO WOULD'VE KNOWN THAT FOOLS LIKE THIS WERE STILL AROUND?!

!!

!!

GASP!

FICH

FICH

FICH

FICH

AH-HAH. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

YOU AND I SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE.

FICH

FICH

FICH

YARRGH!!

HOW DARE YOU LEAVE ME OUT OF THIS?! WHAT'S GOING ON?!

FICH

MURATA!!

TWAK

YAHH!!

NNGH!!

Vagabond

(HMPH...)
(FINALLY, A DECENT TASK...)

KRAK

YAH!!

FICH

!!

ARGH!

WHUMP

NNGH!

#90 The Battle

TU MP

IT'S AS IF HE'S ON FIRE.

HMPH.

NOT A COMPETITION NOR A MATCH OVER TECHNIQUE...

...BUT A FIGHT FOR ONE'S LIFE.

A BATTLE...

THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN BY BATTLE.

SO THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, MUSASHI.

VERY INTERESTING...

WE ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE.

ALL RIGHT.

...NO MORE HOLDING BACK.

FWOOSH

FICH

FICH

FWOOSH

THIS ONE'S MINE!!

YAHH! OUT OF MY WAY!!

FWOOSH

UNTIL I REACH SEKISHIŌSAI, I WON'T LOSE, NO MATTER WHO GETS IN MY WAY.

MASTER...

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD.

PLIP

PLIP

IT'S NOT BITTER AT ALL.

.....

I DON'T WANT IT. IT'S TOO BITTER.

HERE IS YOUR MEDICINE.

IT'S BITTER BECAUSE YOU THINK IT'S BITTER.

WILL YOU OPEN THE DOOR A BIT?

HYOGONOSUKE WILL BE EXTENDING HIS STAY...

...UNTIL YOU'RE BETTER.

I SEE...

IT'S BITTER BECAUSE IT'S WORKING. IT'S GOOD FOR YOU.

BLECH... IT'S SO BITTER...

KOFF

I FEEL A STIRRING WITHIN MY BREAST THIS NIGHT_

WILL YOU PLAY THE FLUTE FOR ME...?

THERE'S A WARM BREEZE BLOWING.

I THINK WE SHOULD CLOSE THE DOOR NOW.

FINE.

OTSU_

.....

I ONLY PLAYED IT THAT ONE TIME!

AND THAT WAS ONLY BECAUSE YOU KEPT INSISTING.

OH, COME NOW.

YOU STILL KEEP IT WITH YOU, RIGHT?

YOU OFTEN USED TO PLAY WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE...

...THAT BAMBOO FLUTE.

YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TECHNIQUE...

STILL...

THERE IS SOMETHING QUITE MOVING ABOUT YOUR PLAYING.

I'D REALLY LIKE TO HEAR IT ONE MORE TIME...

THIS FLUTE...

...WHEN I WAS ABANDONED AT SHIPPŌJI TEMPLE IN THE VILLAGE OF MIYAMOTO...

...I WAS FOUND HOLDING IT...

WON'T YOU DO A SMALL FAVOR FOR THIS POOR DECREPIT OLD MAN?

I WON'T.

YOU HAVE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL. BUT THE HEART OF A DEMON.

THAT'S RIGHT, SIR.

A DEMON, I TELL YOU.

BUT LOOK, I KNIT YOU A CAP, SEE?

TO KEEP YOUR HEAD WARM.

REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME?

NOTHING'S WRONG WITH CRYING.

AND WHENEVER I PLAY IT, I START TO THINK ABOUT THINGS I USUALLY DO NOT DWELL UPON...

..AND THEN I JUST END UP IN TEARS. THAT'S WHY I DON'T PLAY ANYMORE.

OH, GOOD. IT SUITS YOU...

.....

AFTER ALL, I DON'T HAVE MUCH TECHNIQUE.

WELL, THEN, GOOD NIGHT, MASTER.

SO YOU WON'T PLAY THE FLUTE FOR ME...?

KOFF

KOFF

UNGH ...

.....

IWEEE
IWEEE
IWEEE

SLISH

FP

GASP!

I CAN'T EVEN SEE HIS SWORD !!

MASTER!!

OH, NO...

!!

HE DODGED MY ATTACK?!

THIS RONIN ELUDED MY SWORD!

SO THIS IS A SENIOR DISCIPLE OF THE YAGYŪ!!

IMPRESSIVE ...

.....

WHICH MEANS THE OTHER THREE ARE AT LEAST AS GOOD AS THIS ONE...

AN IMPRESSIVE SWORDS-MAN...

...WITH JUST ONE STROKE

I SAW THROUGH HIS SWORD...

HUHUHU

I *HAVE* BECOME STRONGER.

THANK YOU, OLD MAN.

I HAVE FOUR EXPERT SWORDSMEN BEFORE ME...

BUT I DON'T FEEL I'LL LOSE!

YOU'RE ALL, LIVING INSIDE OF ME; AS IF YOU'RE A PART OF ME.

FICH FICH

FIC

WHAT IS THIS FEELING I HAVE...?

KRICH

..IT'S NOT AS IF I'M SURE I'LL WIN...

STILL...

SHUK

.....

SWIP SWIP

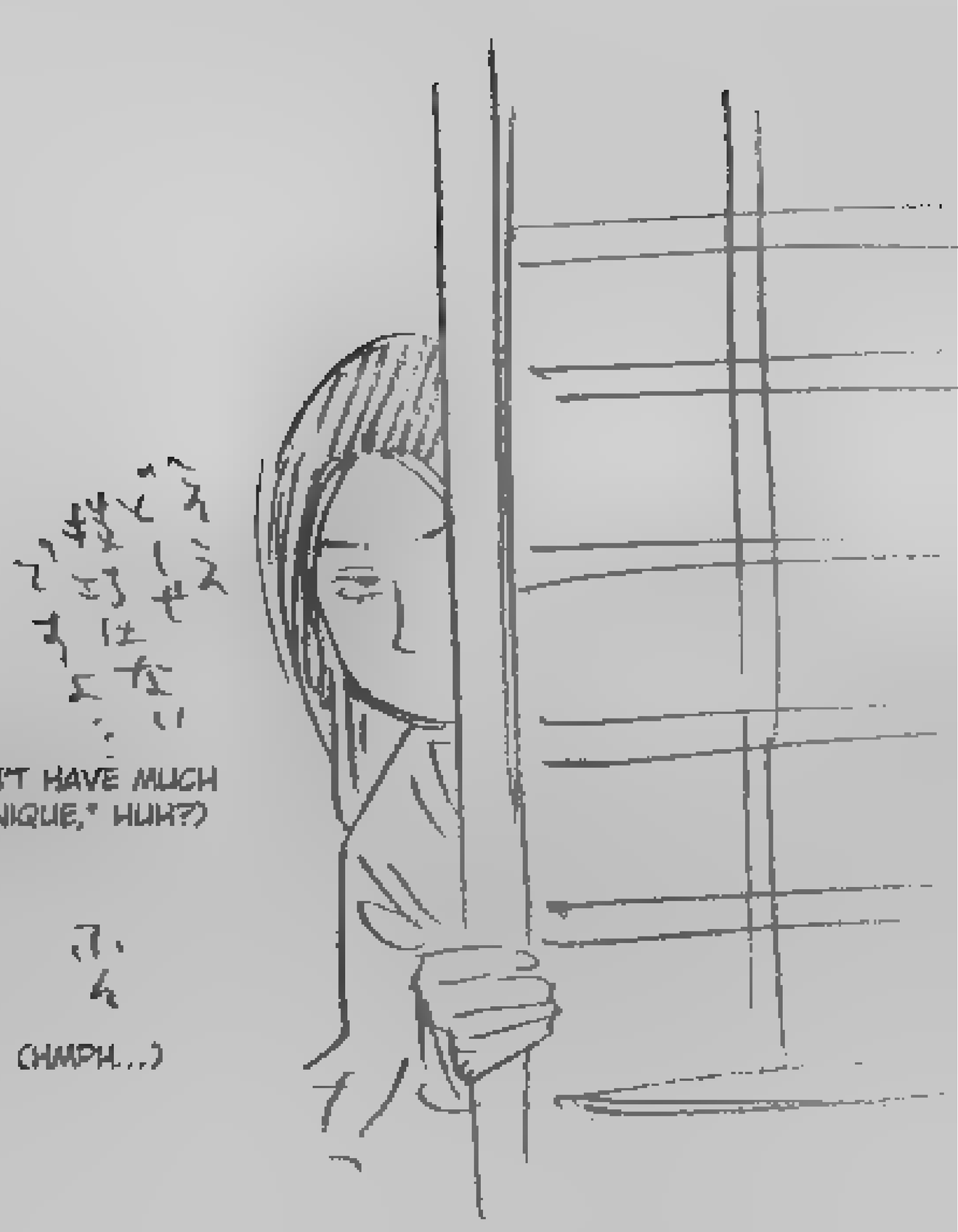
THANK YOU, INSHUN.

IT WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE EVEN WERE I TO CLOSE MY EYES...

I CAN'T BELIEVE A MAN SUCH AS THIS EXISTS.

...THAT'S HOW IT FEELS.

Vagabond


("DON'T HAVE MUCH TECHNIQUE," HUH?)
(HMPH...)

#9 Bamboo Flute

LOOMING YET INTENSE...

A SANGUINARY CALM...

HOW CAN HE BE SO COMPOSED AGAINST THE FOUR OF US?

I CAN'T BELIEVE A MAN SUCH AS THIS TRULY EXISTS.

SWORD AGAINST SWORD...

I WOULD HAVE LIKED A PROPER MATCH AGAINST HIM...

BUT THIS MAN IS DETERMINED TO GET TO OUR LORD. HE MUST BE DEFEATED AT ALL COST...

...NO MATTER HOW COWARDLY IT MAY SEEM

SHUF

FICH

SHUF

MOST OF THE TIME THE GROUP IS OVERCONFIDENT, THINKING THEY HAVE AN OVERWHELMING ADVANTAGE. EACH INDIVIDUAL CANNOT FULLY FOCUS.

I DEFEAT THEIR STRONGEST, AND THEN THE OTHERS START TO SHOW FEAR.

THE GROUP LOSES COMPOSURE, EVENTUALLY TO COME UNDONE.

I'VE BEEN OUTNUMBERED MANY TIMES BEFORE.

FOUR AGAINST ONE...

BUT THESE MEN ARE DIFFERENT. THEY'RE NOT RELYING ON THEIR NUMBERS.

EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM.

THEY ARE COMPLETELY FOCUSED.

THEY ARE INDEED THE SENIOR DISCIPLES OF THE YAGYU.

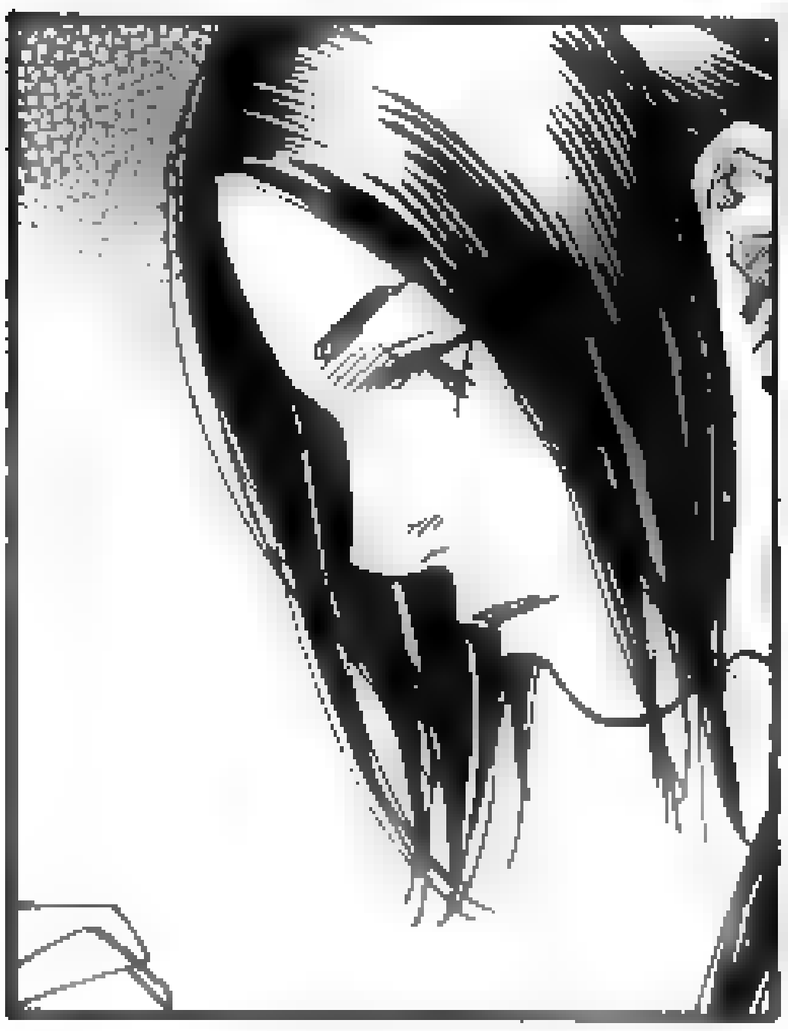
THIS CASTLE WON'T EASILY FALL.

FIGH

HUF.
HM.
HUF.
HUF.
HM.
HUF.
HM.
HUF.
HUF.
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING...
HUF.
HUF.
THIS ISN'T GOOD...
ALL FOUR OF THEM.
THESE MEN HAVE EXCEPTIONAL SKILL...
OTSU!!
SHUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

KCHK

!!



IF YOU GO OFF TO SUCH A HUGE BATTLE...

...WHEN COULD YOU POSSIBLY COME BACK?

I'VE GOT NO IDEA!

I'LL BE SO IMPRESSIVE IN BATTLE THAT I'LL ESTABLISH MYSELF AS THE MIGHTY HON'IDEN MATAHACHI OF MIYAMOTO VILLAGE!!

TOMORROW'S OUR BIG DAY. WE'RE OFF TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD TO FULFILL OUR AMBITION!!

STOP YOUR SULKING, OTSU!!

RIGHT...

WE'RE GOING TO MAKE NAMES FOR OURSELVES !!

RIGHT, TAKEZO?!

I WANT TO HEAR YOUR FLUTE.

WHAT ?

.....

WHEN WE WERE KIDS, I USED TO HEAR YOU PLAYING HERE AT SHIPPOJI TEMPLE.

YOU USED TO GO OFF ON YOUR OWN AND PLAY...

PLEASE, I WANT TO HEAR YOUR FLUTE SO I CAN REMEMBER YOU WHEN I'M OUT ON THE BATTLEFIELD...

THIS DECISIVE BATTLE WILL DETERMINE WHO RULES THIS COUNTRY...IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE WE RETURN.

MATA-
HACHI!

TMP

TMP

I WANT TO GO WITH YOU GUYS...

.....

ARE YOU REALLY COMING BACK?

SNIFF

TAKEZŌ...

WE'LL BE BACK.

DON'T BE STUPID.

YOU'LL HELP MATAHACHI WHEN HE'S IN DANGER, WON'T YOU?

YES...

DON'T WORRY. I WILL.

TAKEZO...

FICH

FICH

A FATAL MISTAKE, MUSASHI!!

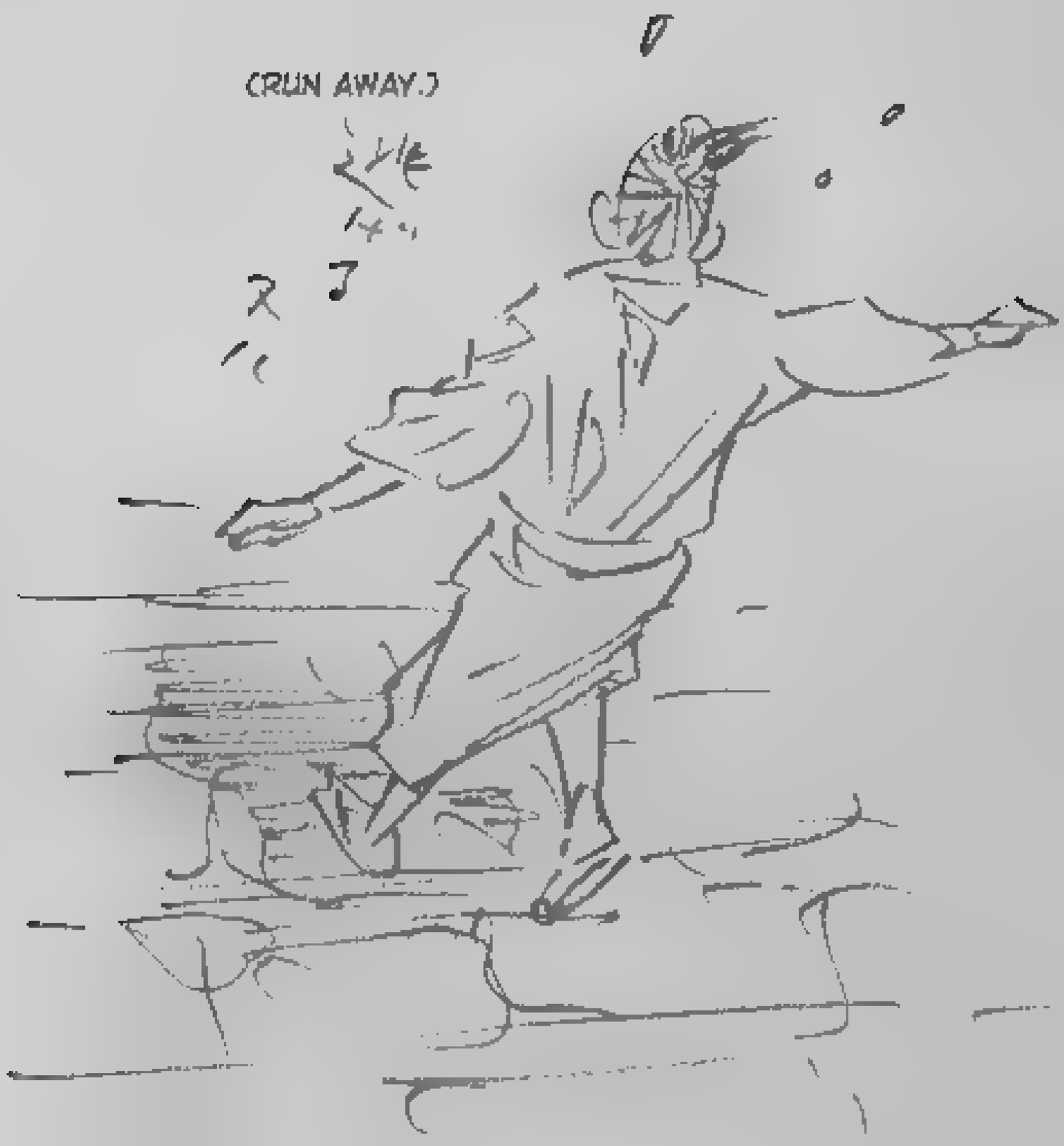
TWO SWORDS OUT OF DESPERATION...

FIGHT

A ONE-HANDED SWORD CAN CUT THROUGH FLESH, BUT NOT THROUGH TO THE BONE!!

!

Vagabond


(RUN AWAY.)

#92

The Four Senior Disciples

FWOOSH

!!

FWISH

NNGH!

FRAK

IRACHI

!!

WHOOSH

ZHUSH
FWOOSH
!!

FICH

MY EAR...!!

FICH

FWOOSH

HMPH !!

FICH

FICH

FICH

HRM!

TUNK

YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY!!

FICH

!!

THWIZ

TUGG

SKUNK

!!

SMIRKS

SMIRK

THINK

TUGG

KRAK

WHUDD

FICH

F.ICH

F.ICH

HUF.

KRAK

NNGH!

HUF.

HUF.

WHAT'S THIS?!

HUF.

FICH

!!

FICH

HAVE TO FIGHT THEM ONE BY ONE.

HUF.

HUF.

CAN'T LET THEM SUR-ROUND ME.

HUF.

.....

THERE!

HELP

HELP

HELP

HELP

HELP

HELP

HELP

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

HEH HEH...

HUF.

HUF.

WHO WANTS TO BE FIRST?

HM.

HUF.

NO, THAT WILL GIVE HIM TIME TO MOVE BACK BEYOND THE BRIDGE...

SHOULD WE CROSS THE STREAM TO CIRCLE IN ON HIM...?

HMM...

HUF. HUF

...AND THAT'S WHERE THE LORD'S COTTAGE IS.

YOU WILL DIE ON THIS BRIDGE, MUSASHI!!

WE MUST NOT LET THAT HAPPEN!!!

GOD

I, KIZAEMON SHŌDA, SHALL ADVANCE!!

I SEE... WE START WITH THE STRONGEST ONE.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

Vagabond

(DISLOCATED. HUH?)
(IT'S HAPPENED TO ME BEFORE.)

MY MASTER'S STRONG, BUT HE'S IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.

HUF HUF...

THOSE FOUR MEN MUST BE THE BEST SWORDSMEN OF THE YAGYU SCHOOL.

FOUR AGAINST ONE! THAT'S NO FAIR!

HUF HUF.

HUF

BUT WHERE IS SHE?

HUF HUF...

HOW CAN I FIND HER?!

I'LL ASK OTSU FOR HELP!!

AHH!

WHUD

AHH!

WHUD

#93 Valor

FMP

DON'T GET CAUGHT UP WITH WHAT SHODA IS DOING!

OR YOU'LL UNDER-ESTIMATE THE ADVANTAGE WE HAVE AS A GROUP.

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ABOUT THAT BASTARD.

SOMETHING YOU CAN ONLY KNOW BY CHALLENGING HIM IN BATTLE.

THIS IS *OUR* FIGHT.

WE JUST HAVE TO STAY CALM AND FOCUS ON STOPPING THIS MAN.

THAT MUSASHI ISN'T EVEN IN A FIGHTING STANCE...

WHY ISN'T SHODA ATTACKING?

WHY IS HE RETREATING?!

HUF...

HUF...

WHAT'S WRONG?

DON'T RETREAT !!

FICH

FICH

...!!

FICH

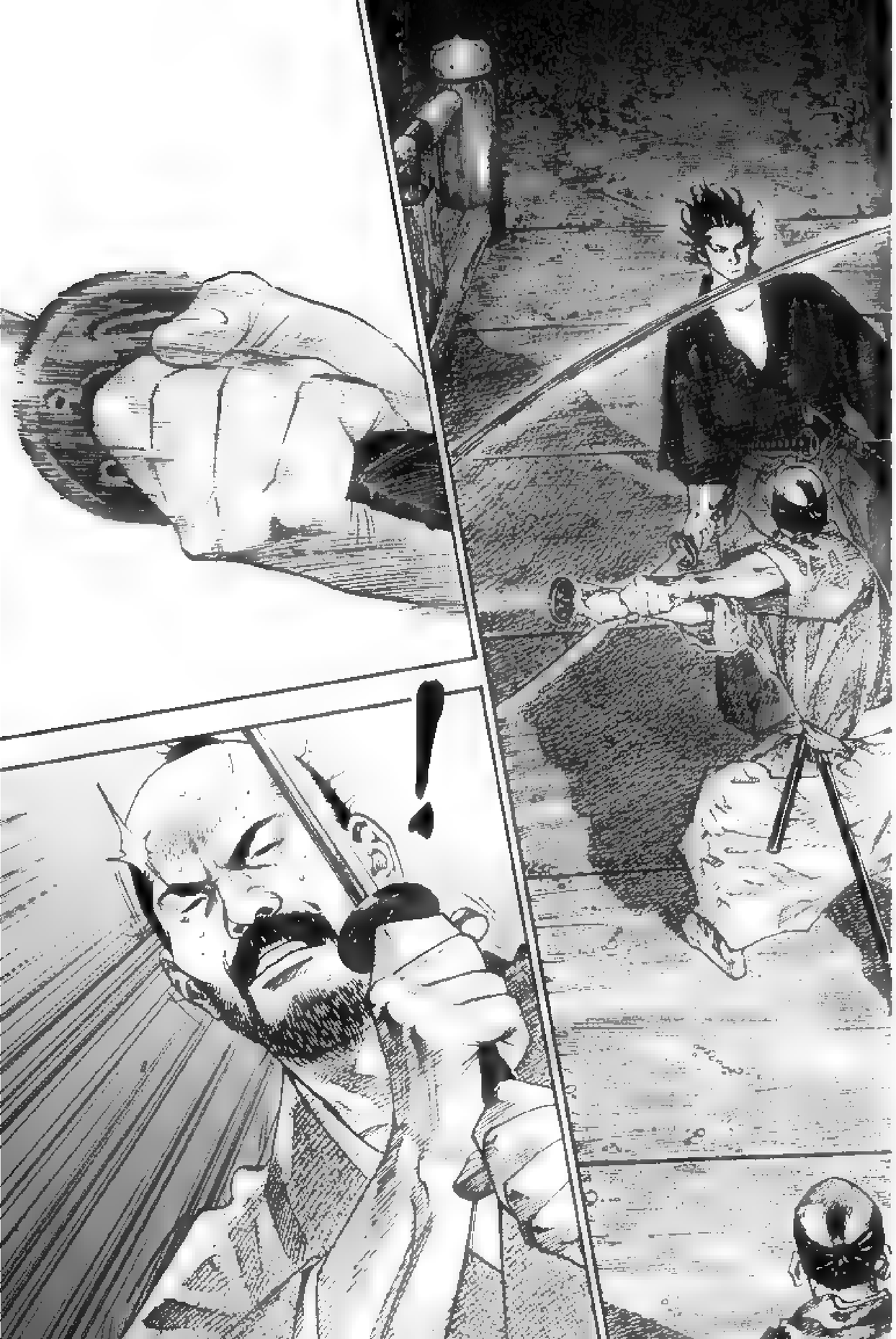
HUF...

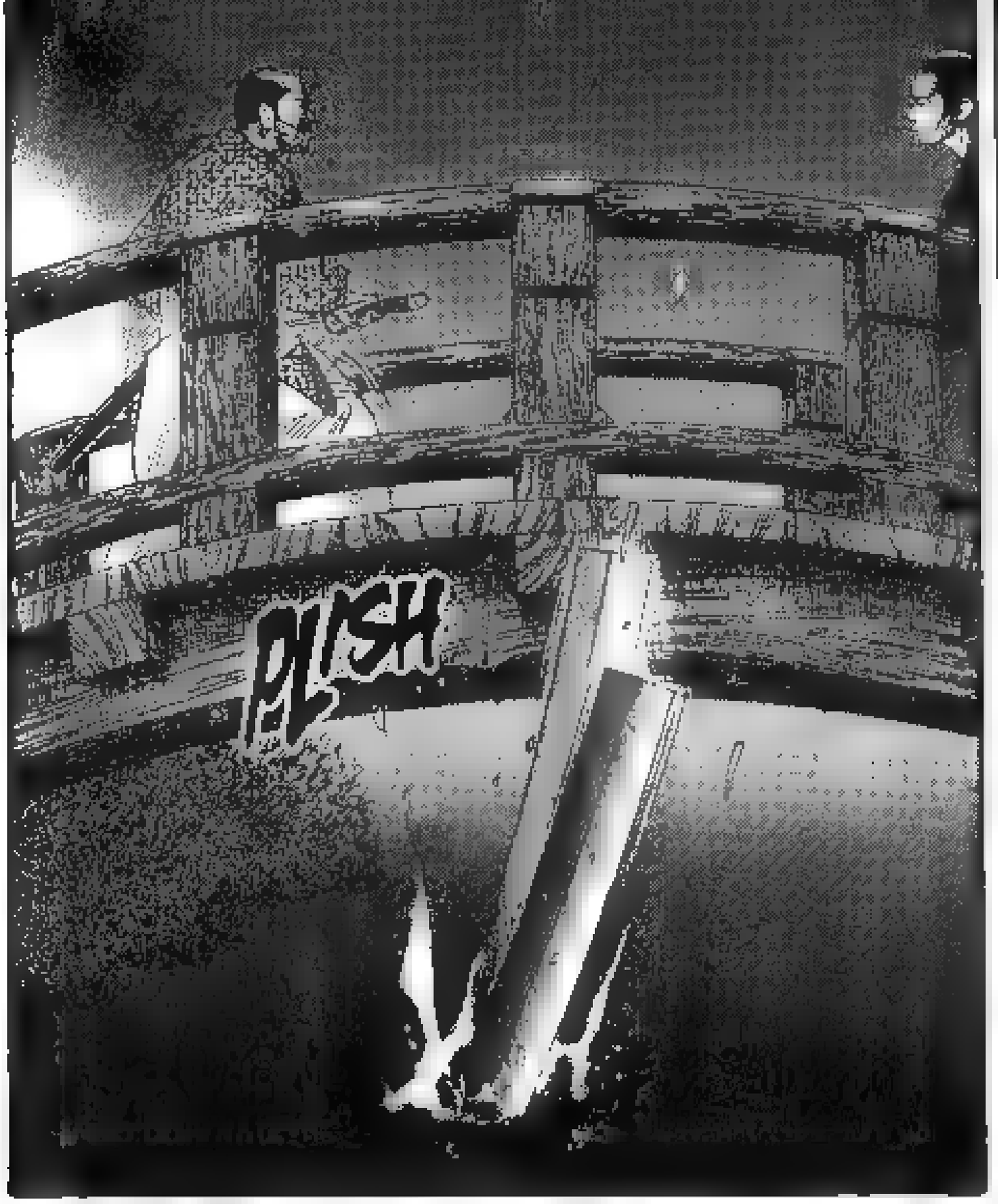
HUF...

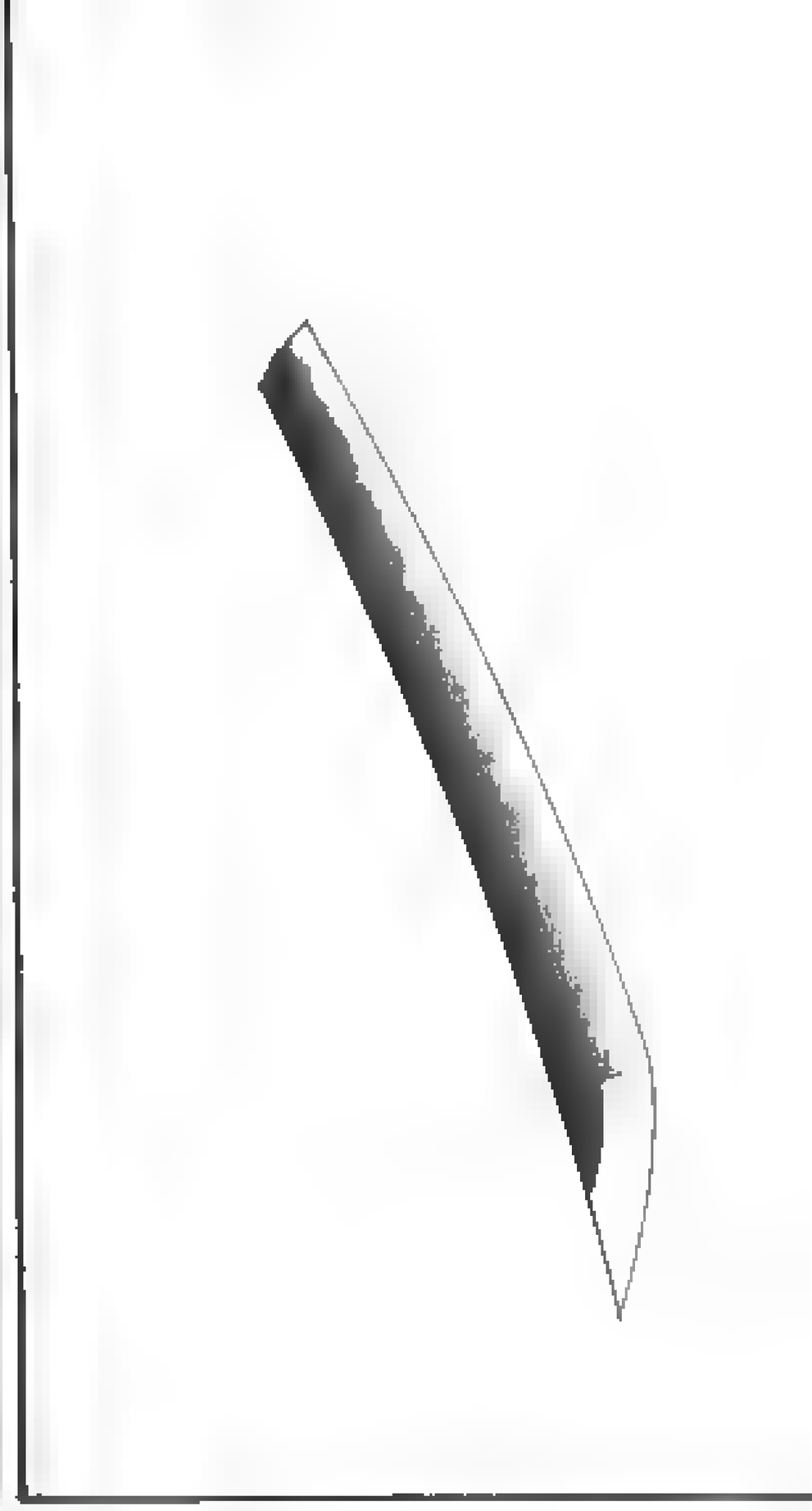
DOES HE SEE RIGHT THROUGH ME?

.....

JUMP




PISH



ICH!

THIS MAN...

HIS ONE-HANDED SWORD COULD CUT THROUGH BONE!

...!!

HOW COULD I KIZAEMON SHODA BE AFRAID?!

HMPH!

THIS FEELING...

FICH

IT'S AS IF HE'S NOT THINKING AT ALL

OMEHOW

EVEN IF I THINK TWO, THREE OR EVEN FOUR MOVES AHEAD, IT'S AS IF HE'S ANTICIPATING MY EVERY MOVE...

AND YET

I'VE HAD THIS FEELING MANY TIMES BEFORE, FACING ANOTHER...

AS IF HE'S POSSESSED...

MUSASHI!

HOW WAS IT YOU CAME UPON THE WAY? HOW DID YOU MAKE IT THIS FAR...?

I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR ORIGINS...

.....

JUMP
JUMP

FUCK!

WE WILL NOT LET YOU CROSS THIS BRIDGE!!

DEBUCHI!

KIMURA!

MURATA!!

IF IT COMES DOWN TO IT, STAB THIS MAN RIGHT THROUGH MY OWN BODY.

YOU SHALL BE DYING, TOO...

THE VALOROUS MAN NAMED SHŌDA...

YOU *WILL* BE REMEMBERED ...

Vagabond

(SHODA...)
(HE'S SURPRISED, BUT HIS EYES ARE STILL JUST LINES.)

#94 Retribution

NO NEED FOR A FIGHTING STANCE?

I'M FINE AS I AM.

I KNOW YOUR INTENT IS NOT TO DISPARAGE ME.

I UNDER-STAND, MUSASHI.

SIR SHODA

LET US NOT FORGET.

THIS IS NO DUEL.

THIS IS RETRIBUTION!

...AND BEYOND...

ALL OF MUSASHI'S FIVE SENSES...

SURROUNDED BY FOUR MASTER SWORDSMEN...

...EVEN MUSASHI'S SIXTH SENSE WAS ON EDGE, PUSHED TO LIMITS EXTREME.

THEY'RE PANICKED ?

!!

SEKISHŪSAI!

FWOOSH

MUSASHI!!

VWOOM
!!

!!

FIRE

SEKISHŪSAI MUST BE NEAR AT HAND!

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

SUCH BLOODLUST...

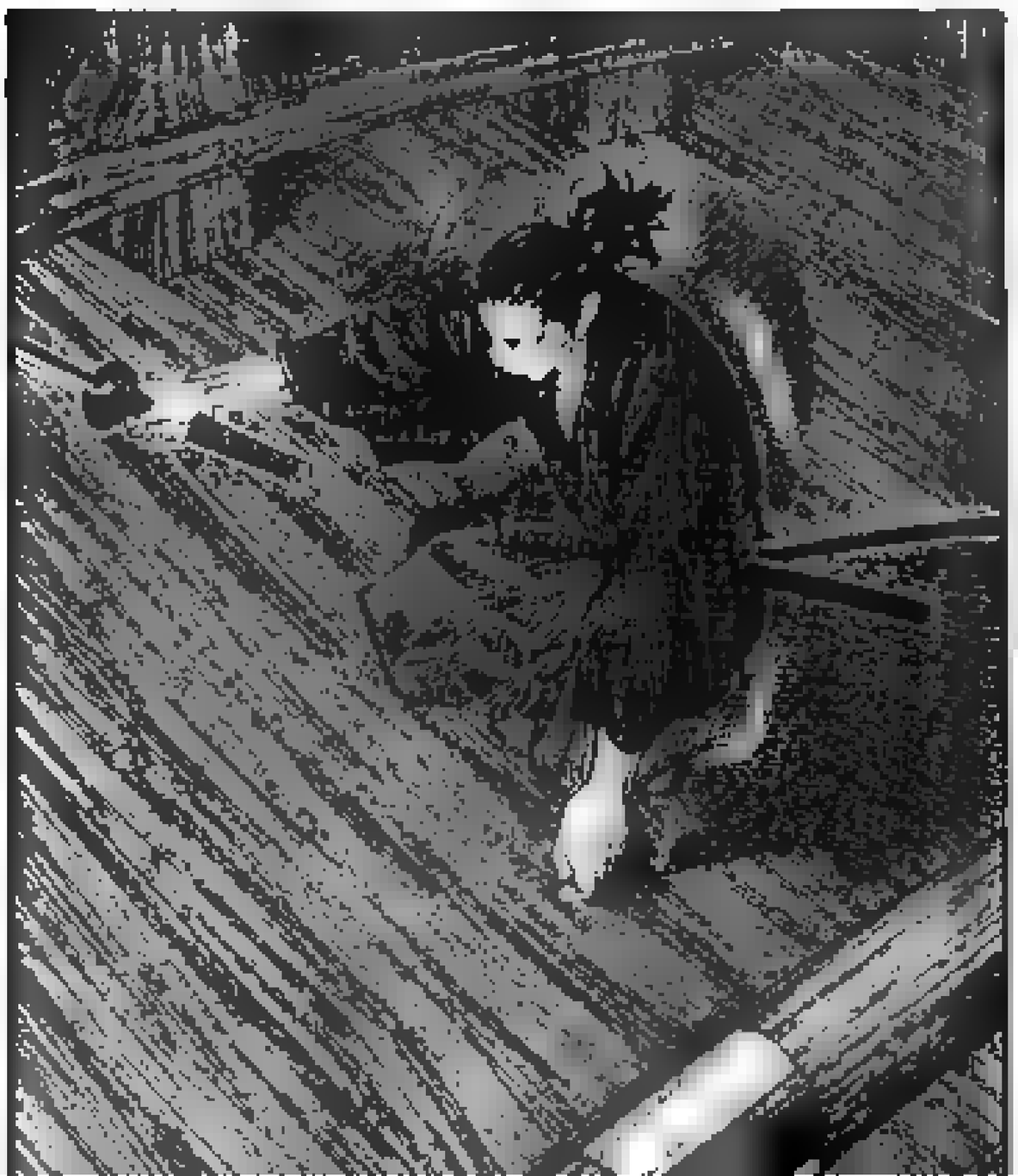
HUF.

HUF.

UNF...

HUF.

HUF.



HE'S LIKE A WILD BEAST!!
HUF.
HUF.

!

SWAP

UNGH...

I'LL CROSS THAT BRIDGE *AFTER* I DEFEAT YOU GUYS.

RELAX.

!!...!!

SPLASSH

THEY SAY THAT YOUR LIFE FLASHES BEFORE YOUR EYES WHEN YOU DIE.

IT SEEMS TO BE TRUE, OTSU.

I WAS DAY-DREAM-ING...

KOFF!

.....

HEH HEH...

...BEFORE I EVER MET MASTER ISE...

I SAW MYSELF WHEN I WAS YOUNG...

COMPLETELY MISUNDERSTOOD IT--THE MEANING OF TRUE STRENGTH...

THEN I'LL BE ALONE...

IF THE MASTER SHOULD PASS AWAY...

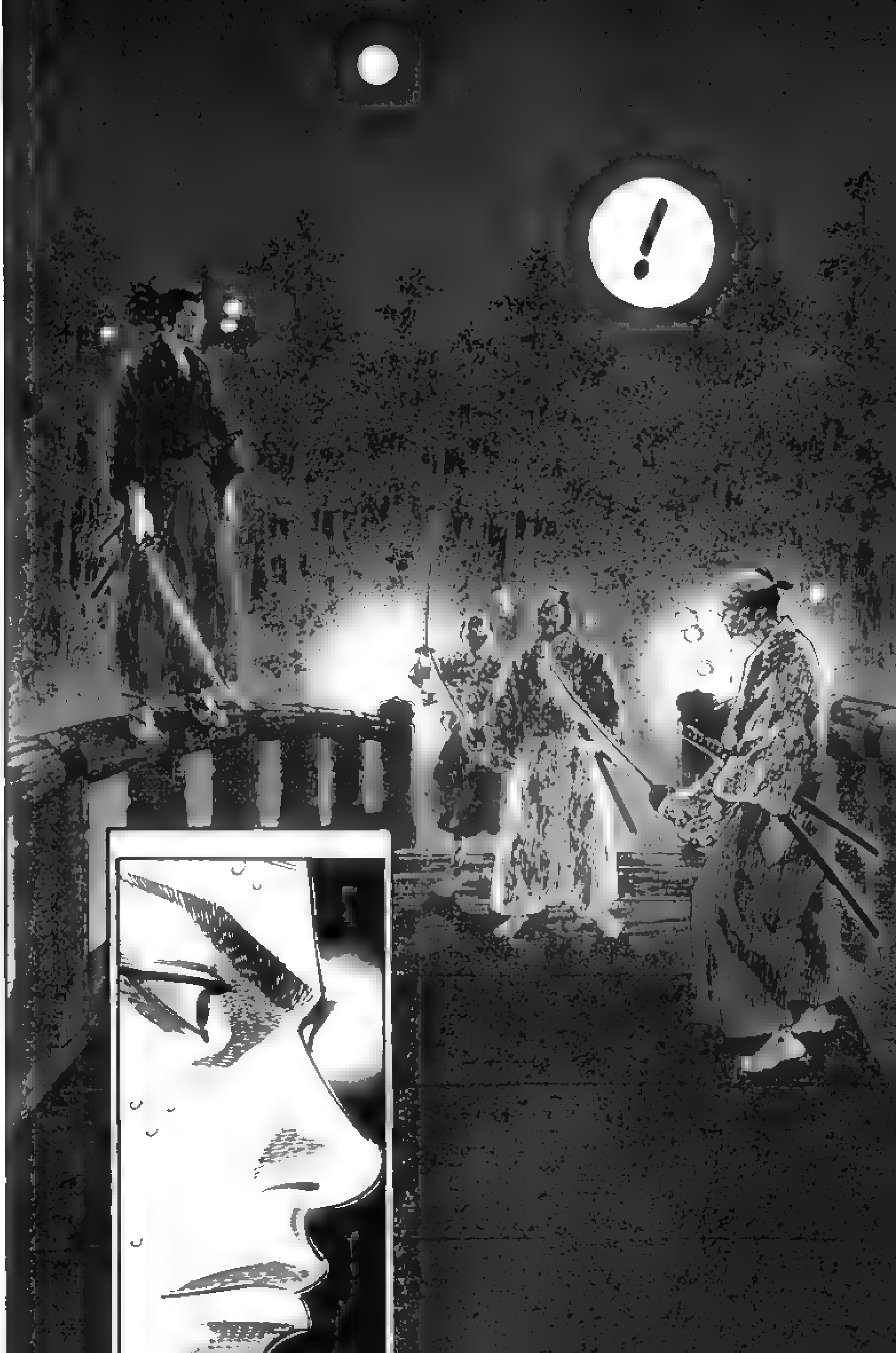
MAYBE I'VE GOTTEN SOFT FROM THIS NICE LIFE HERE AT THE YAGYU ESTATE.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ALONE...

NO

TAKEZO...

I'M SO LONELY, TAKEZO.



Vagabond

(GLUG GLUG...)
(HAVING A ROUGH TIME.)

#95 Longing

A FLUTE...?

HUF.

WHO'S PLAY-ING...?

HUF.

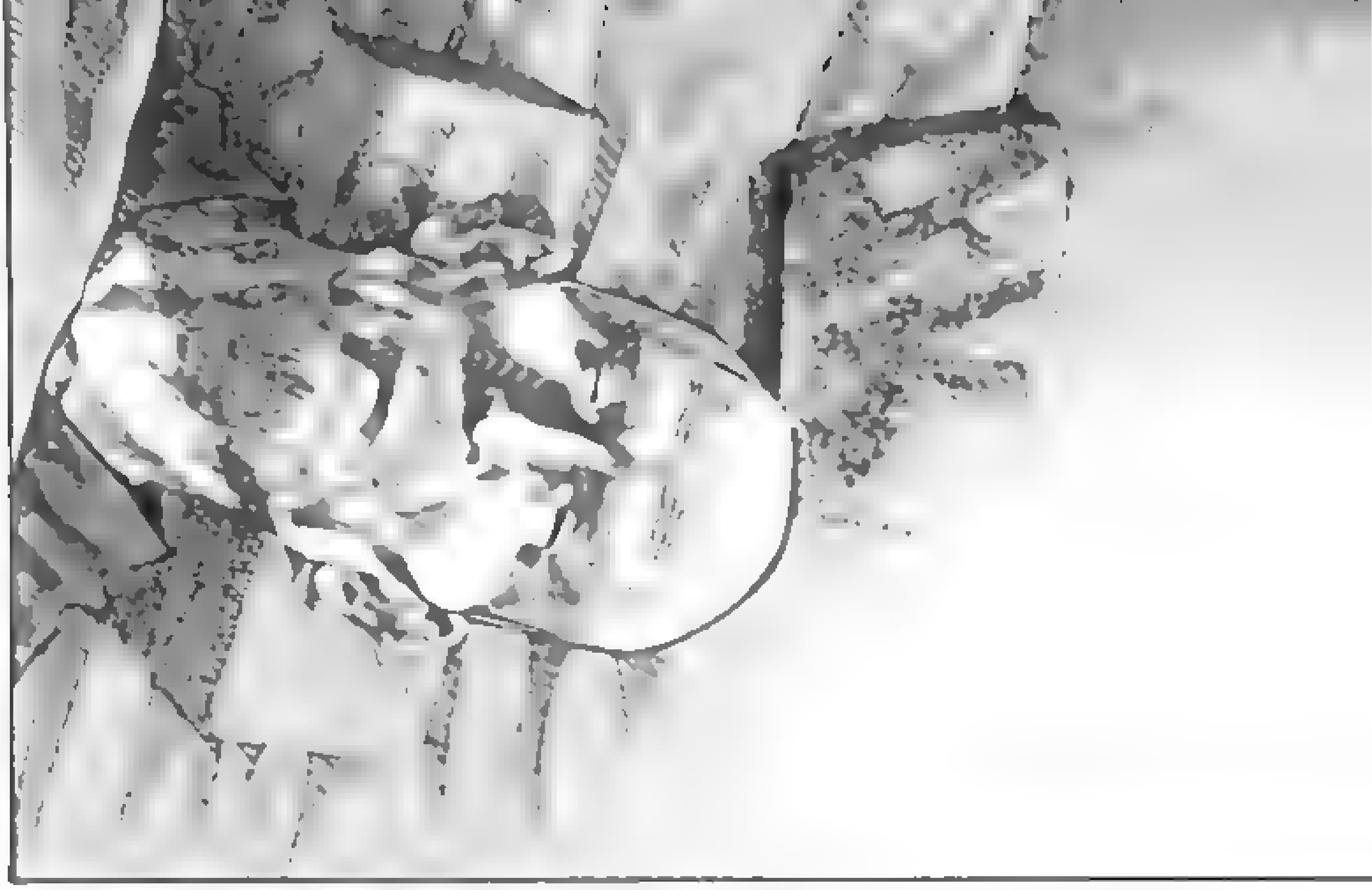
HUF.

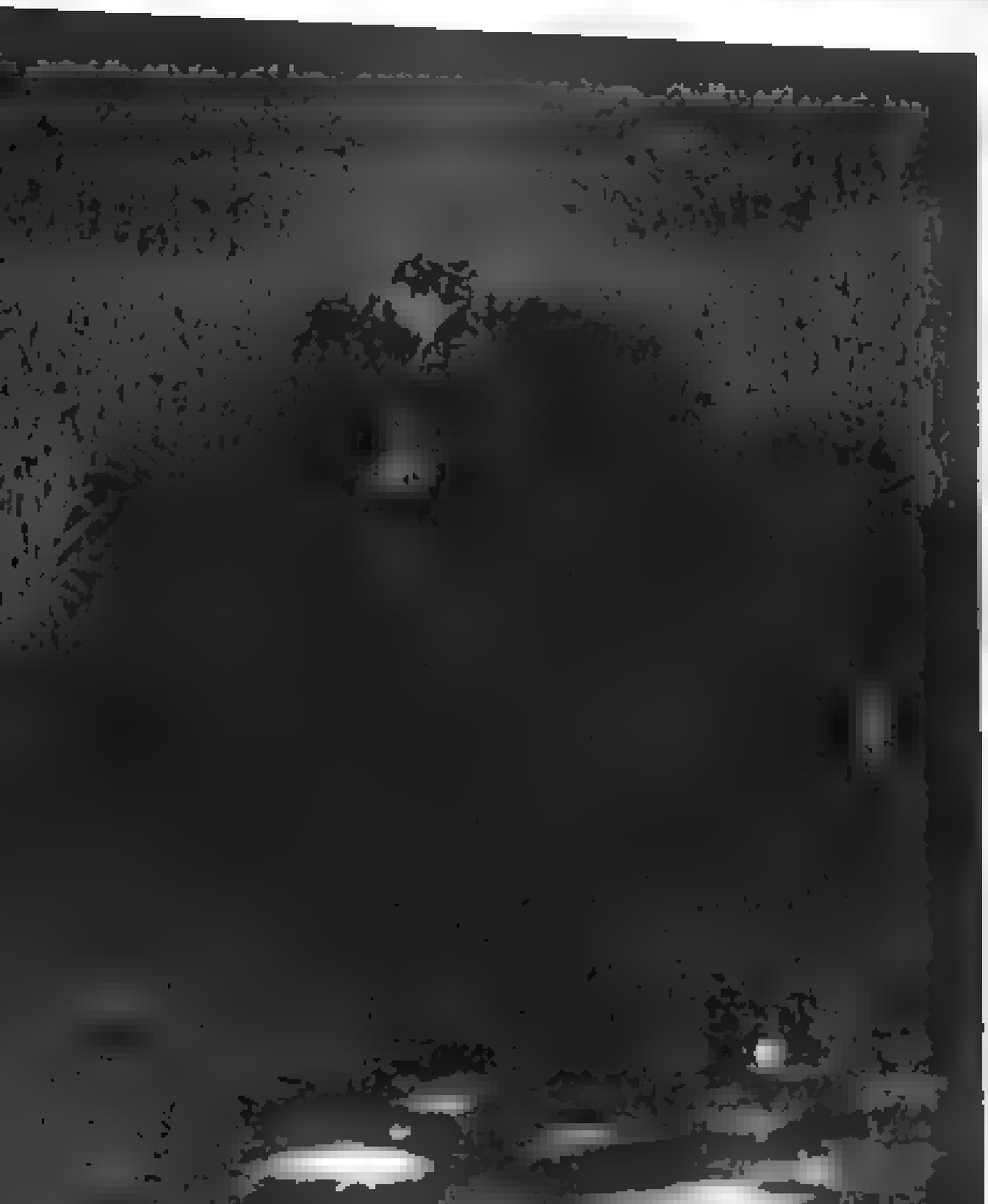
HUF.

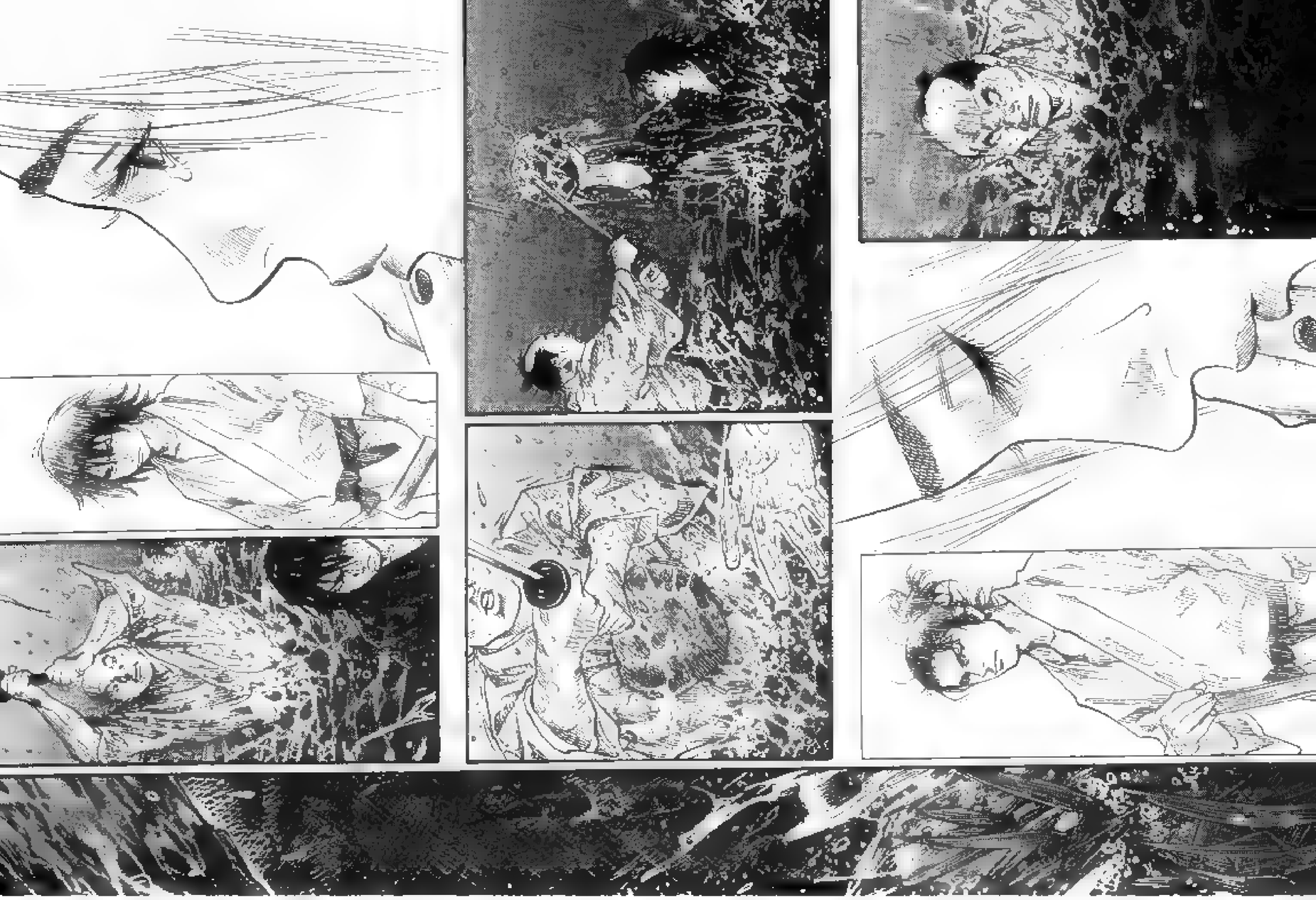
HUF.

HUF.

HUF.







Vagabond

(MUTTER MUTTER...)

I MUST HAVE BEEN HEARING THINGS...

IT STOPPED.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

WAS IT SOMETHING THAT CAME FROM WITHIN MY SOUL?

I MUST HAVE IMAGINED IT

CHAK

A SIGN THAT I STILL CLING TO LIFE

#96

Reunion

Salsa

FLIP

.....

HMM..

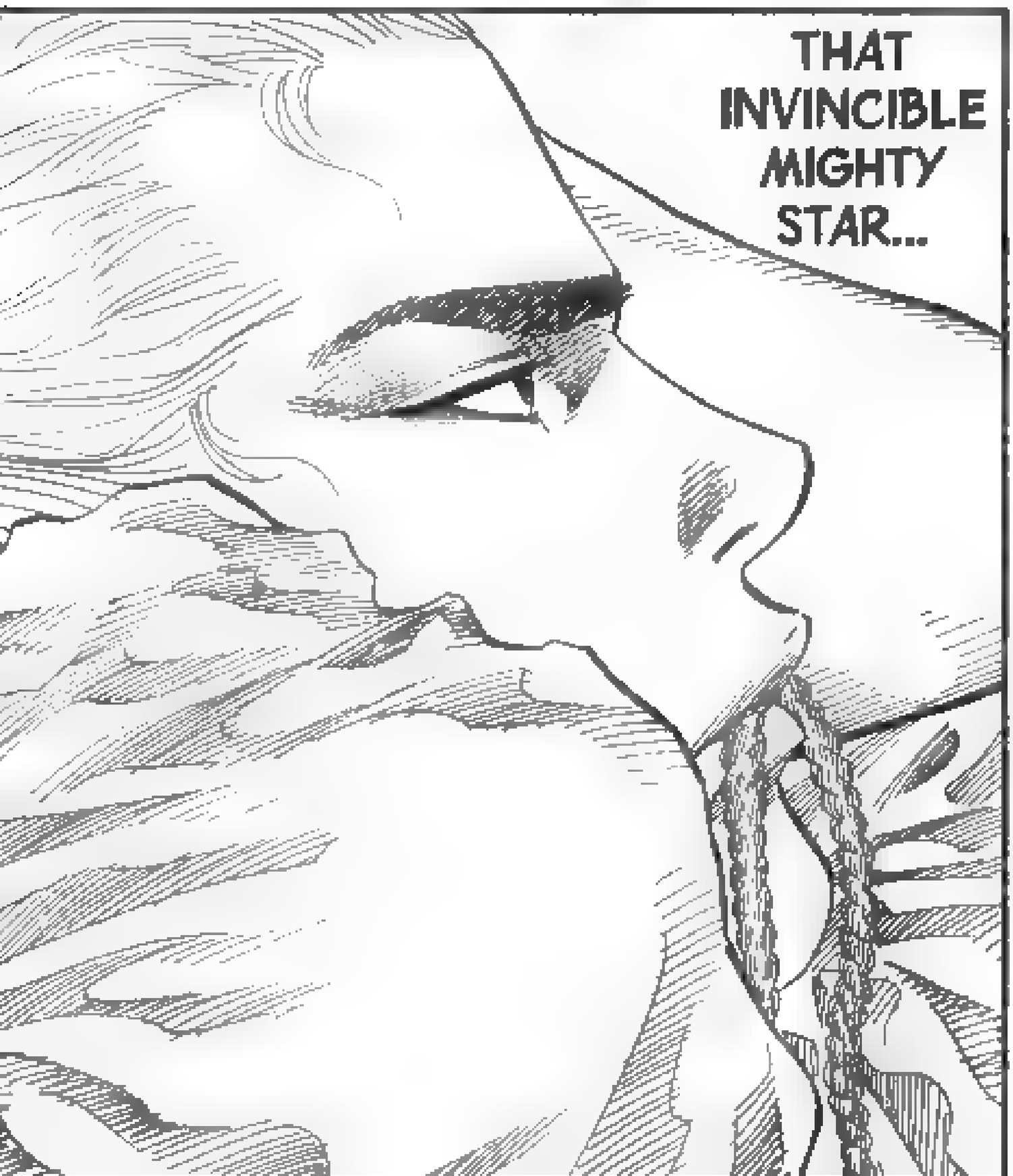
BUSTER

UMM

.....

WHAP

SCHNICK


THAT
INVINCIBLE
MIGHTY
STAR...

IT'S WITHIN ARM'S REACH.

"WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT HIM?"

"YOU LOVE MATAHACHI?"

YOU'RE RIGHT, TAKUAN.

"OTSŪ...THIS IS VERY PECULIAR."

"YOU LIKED MATAHACHI BECAUSE HE CONTINUED TO BE TAKEZŌ'S FRIEND?"

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS FACE

I'M SURE HE LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THIS...

...CHOO !!

WHY AM I ACTING SO WEAK?

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

WHY AM I CRYING?

AHH--

"NO. YOU'LL GET IN THE WAY OF MY TRAINING."

"I'M GOING WITH YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY."

WHAT'S THAT...?

HE'S SO COLD...

SNIFF

HMPH!

TIME FOR BED.

RUSTLE

RUSTLE

A RACCOON ...?

THP-TUMP

THP-TUMP

THP-TUMP

THP-TUMP

RUSTLE

KRAK

OH, NO! THE MASTER...

TMP-TUMP

HUF.

TMP-TUMP

HUF.

TMP-TUMP

HUF.

MASTER!!

TMP-TUMP

HUF.

TMP-TUMP

TMP-TUMP

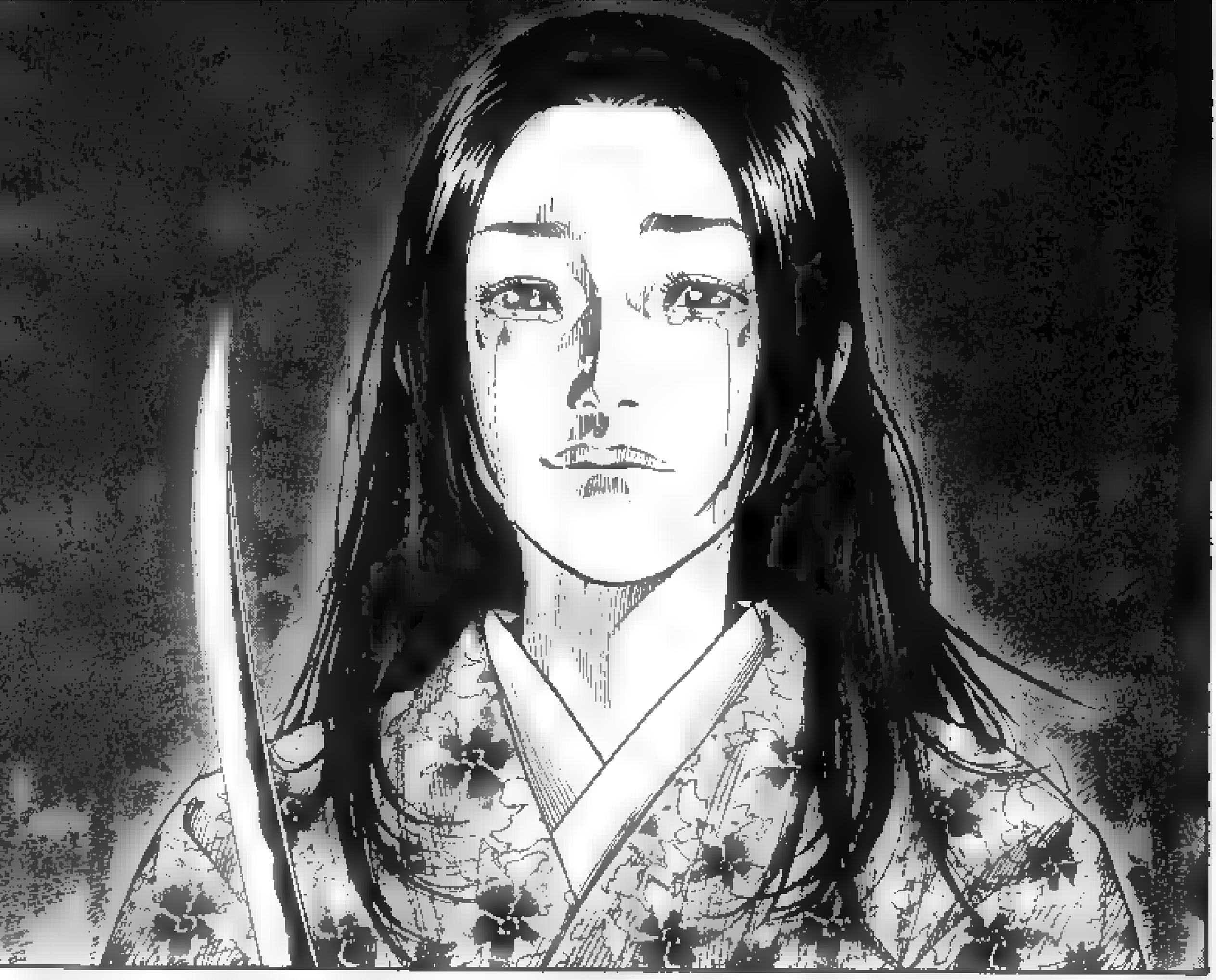
HUF.

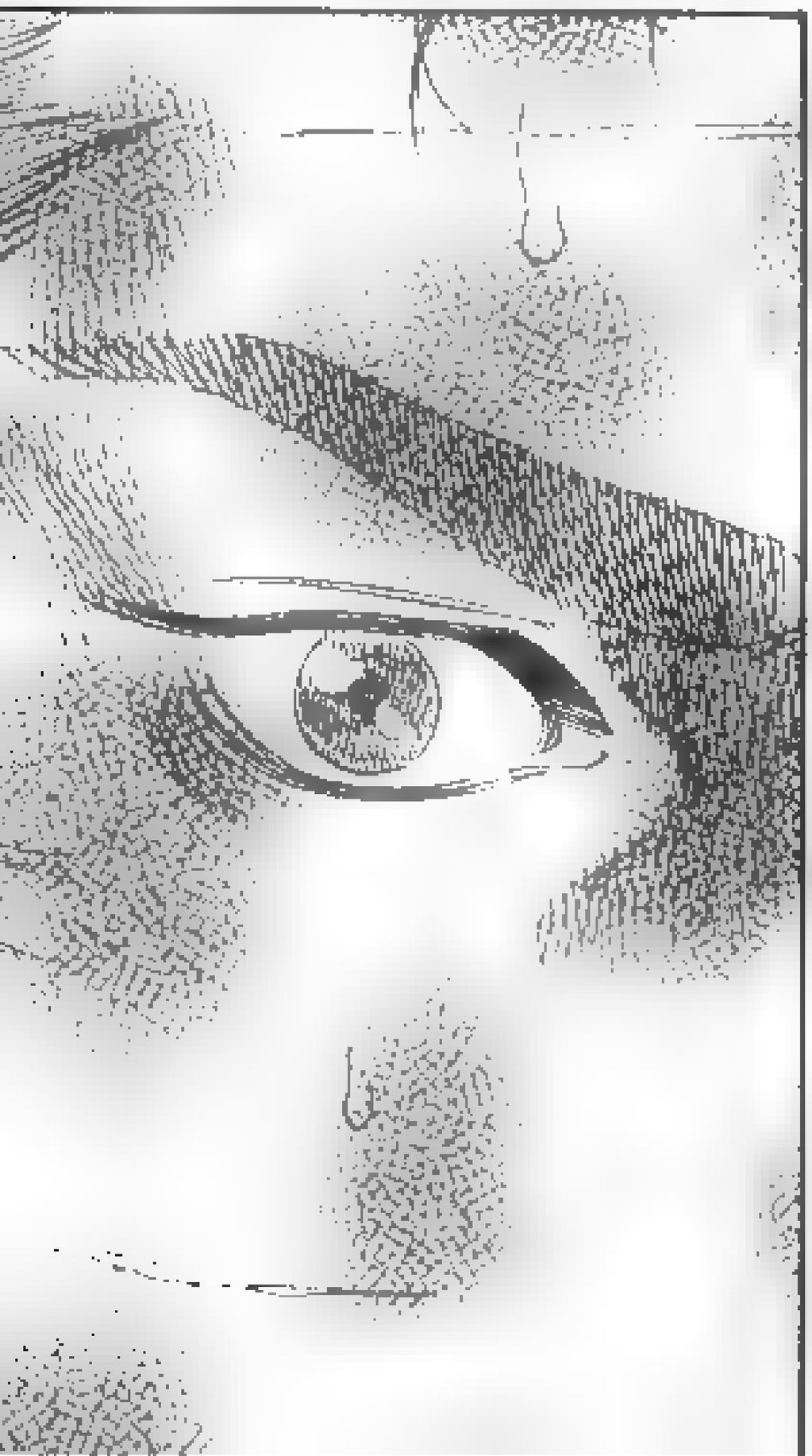
HUF.

WHAT IS SHE DOING HERE...?

WHAT...

I THINK I'M GOING TO CRY AGAIN!!





YOU'VE BECOME...

...SO BEAUTIFUL.

GASP!

#97

Sliding Door

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT, TAKEZŌ?

HAH...

.....

I WAS PREPARED TO PUT *EVERYTHING* ON THE LINE...

MY OPPORTUNITY TO CHALLENGE THE MOST RENOWNED SWORDSMAN THROUGHOUT ALL THE LANDS IS FINALLY AT HAND...

SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL...

...I'M COMPLETELY DISTRACTED!

BUT NOW...

SO SHE'S BEEN WORKING FOR YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...

"SHE MET A HIGHLY ESTEEMED MAN WHO BECAME FOND OF HER. HE TOOK HER IN AS A SERVANT."

...IN THE TIME WE'VE BEEN APART, SHE MATURED INTO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN...

.....

!!

GET OUT OF THE WAY, OTSU.

A SINGLE SLIDING DOOR IS ALL THAT SEPARATES ME FROM YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI.

AND YET AS I AM ABOUT TO FACE THIS REPUTEDLY INVINCIBLE MAN, I FEEL...

MOVE...

.....

I FEEL PATHETIC AND JEALOUS!!

STEP ASIDE, OR I'LL CUT YOU DOWN!

HM...

I CAN'T...

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO BE HERE, OTSU?

I CAN'T MOVE. I'M PARALYZED WITH FEAR.

SHIVER

SHIVER

SHIVER

!!!!

I THOUGHT A SABOTEUR HAD COME TO ASSASSINATE OUR LORD...

.....

YOU'VE NEVER EVEN HELD A SWORD...

HOW COULD YOU BE SO RECKLESS?

I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE...

HMPH.

YOU'D HAVE BEEN KILLED IF IT WEREN'T ME.

MY FEET ARE STUCK, TOO...

.....

FLIP

FLOP

.....

THE MASTER IS BEDRIDDEN. I *HAD* TO PROTECT HIM...

...!!

!!

BEDRIDDEN?!!

THEY'RE COMING ...

HUF.

HUF.

HUF.

I HOPE HE'S OKAY!!

MASTER!!

BUT NOW HE'S SHAVED HIS HEAD TO RETIRE AND RENOUNCE THE WORLD.

IF HE WEREN'T ILL, NO ONE WOULD BE ABLE TO DEFEAT THE INVINCIBLE MASTER YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...

.....

RETIRE?

I GOT SO MAD I JUST GRABBED THE SWORD...

IT'S JUST COWARDLY TO COME AFTER A MAN LIKE THAT!

.....

TAKEZO ...

YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN I WAS HERE...

WHY DID YOU-?

...!!

A SABOTEUR...

...!!

AS FAR AS THE YAGYŪ ARE CONCERNED, I'M NO DIFFERENT FROM A SABOTEUR...

THE INVINCIBLE YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...

I'M NOT CONFIDENT THAT I CAN DEFEAT HIM WITHOUT KILLING HIM.

SHAK

THESE BELONG TO THE MASTER. CHANGE INTO THEM OR YOU'LL CATCH A COLD.

YOU'RE ALL WET, TAKEZO...

HUF

HUF

HUF

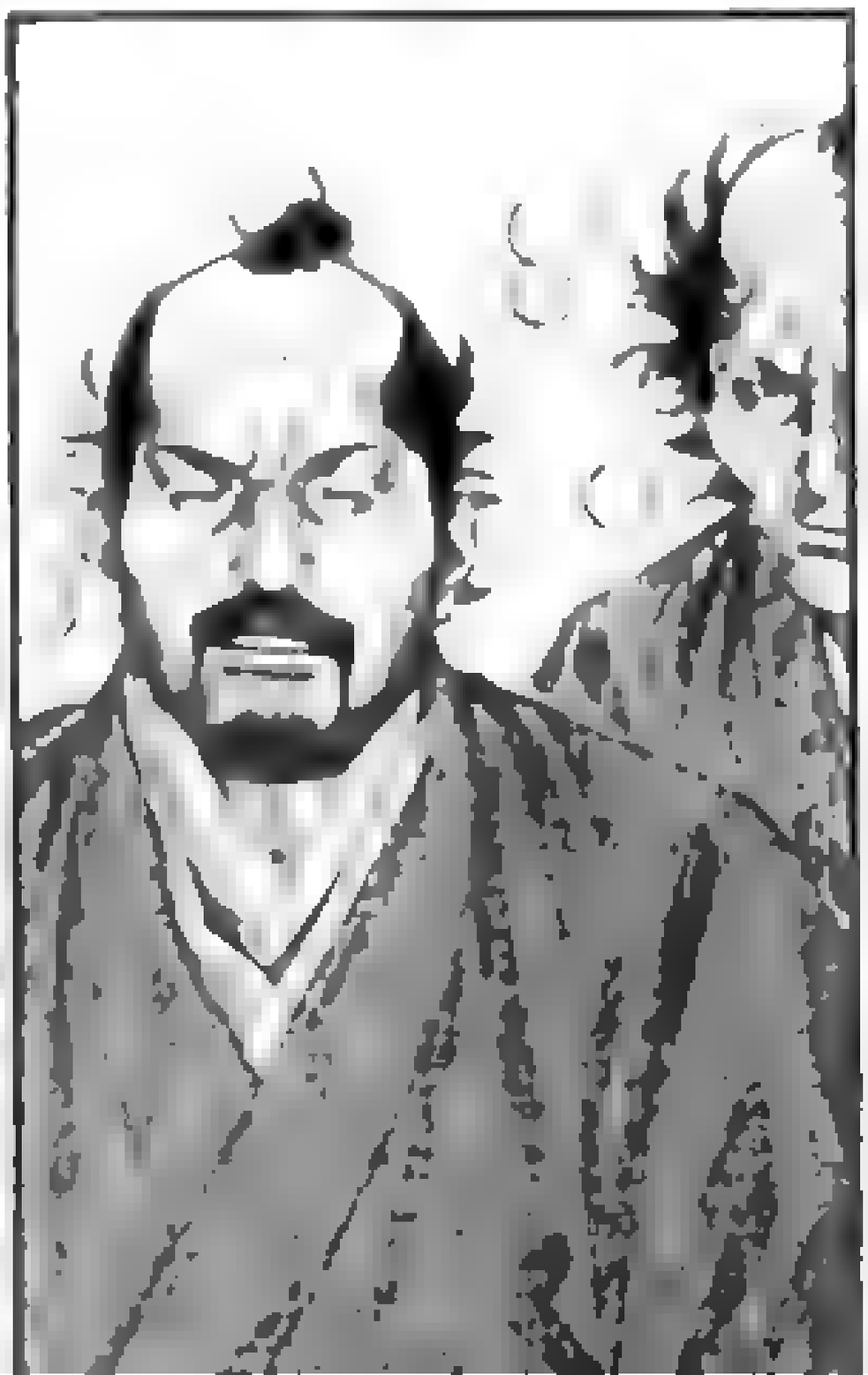
HUF

HUF.

ZHOOP

MASTER!!

PLEASE EXCUSE THE INTRUSION!!



DID A YOUNG RŌNIN COME BY HERE?

.....

SEARCH THE PREMISES.

HE MUST BE HIDING AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE.

YOU SEE...

OTSŪ, YOU SHOULD BE INFORMED OF THE SITUATION...

WE FAILED TO REALIZE THIS MAN'S ULTERIOR MOTIVES...

BUT HE TURNED OUT TO BE DRIVEN BY RECKLESS AMBITIONS.

WE INVITED HIM HERE AS A GUEST...

A RONIN BY THE NAME OF MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS COMING AFTER THE LORD.

BUT WE *SHALL* PROTECT THE MASTER AT ANY COST!!

I'M QUITE CERTAIN...

...MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS NOT THE KIND OF MAN WHO WOULD ASSAULT A WOMAN.

I UNDERSTAND. I'LL RETREAT TO THE BACK ROOM...

THAT WOULD BE BEST.

REST ASSURED, *YOU'RE* IN NO DANGER.

IS HE STRONG?

...!!

SIR SHODA...

YES.

HE IS VERY STRONG.

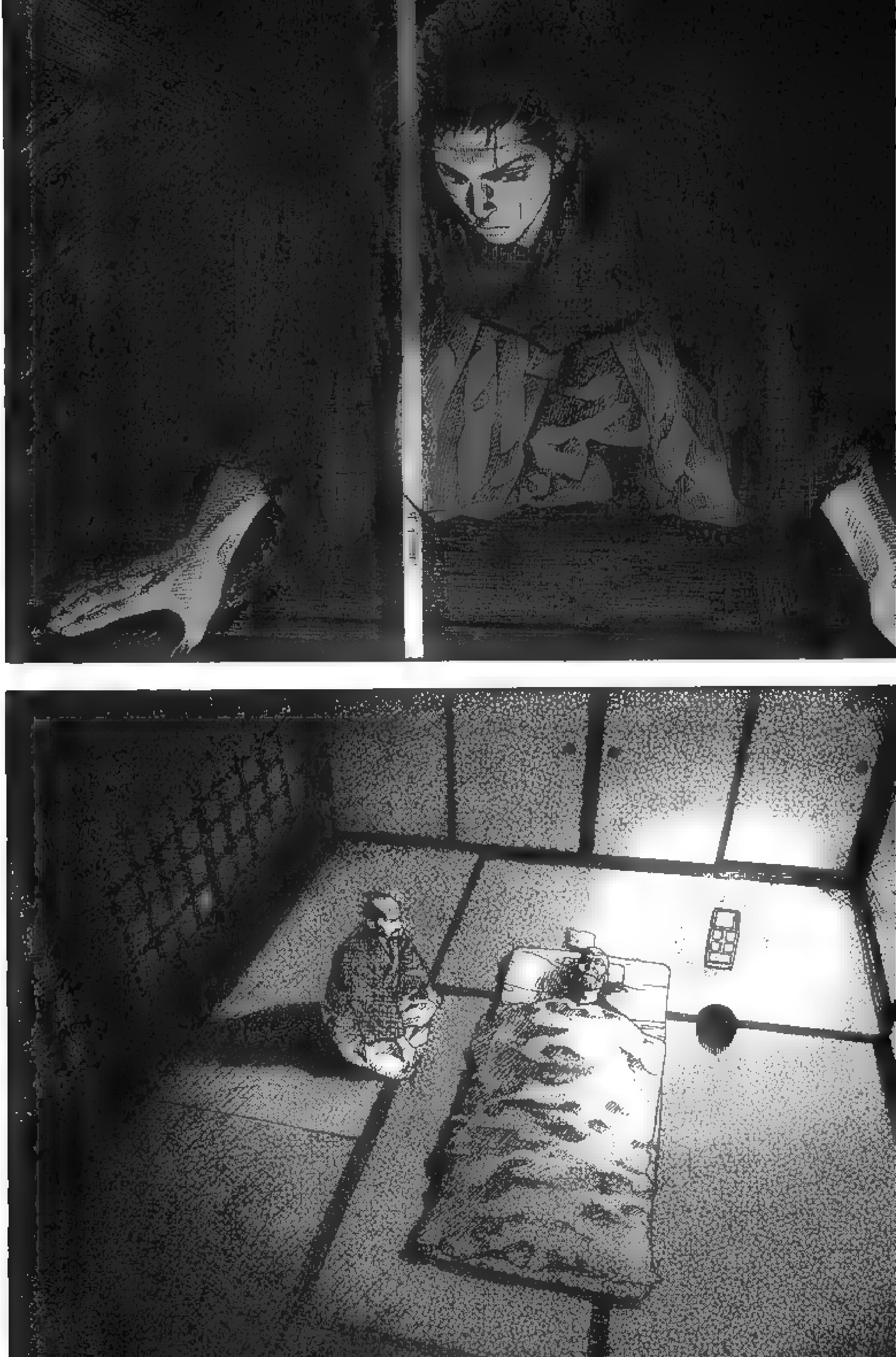
!!
!!!!

I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU...

...TO BECOME STRONGER, DIDN'T WE?

WE LEFT THE VILLAGE...

TAKEZO...



About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. For his work on *VAGABOND*, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga. Most recently in 2002, Inoue's *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. To date, *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once, holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003, NHK produced the historical period drama *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname, followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsuna (1508-1577(?))
The son of Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsugu, the lord of Kami'izumi Castle in present-day Gunma Prefecture. Hidetsuna founded the Shinkage-ryu Style of sword fighting and was such an accomplished swordsman and military strategist that he was once recruited by the famed Takeda Shingen. Hidetsuna, however, declined the post, stating that he preferred to travel throughout the land so that he might perfect his swordsmanship. Many notable figures studied under Hidetsuna including the esteemed Yagyu Munenori and Hozoin In'ei.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo*, and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evil-doers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

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